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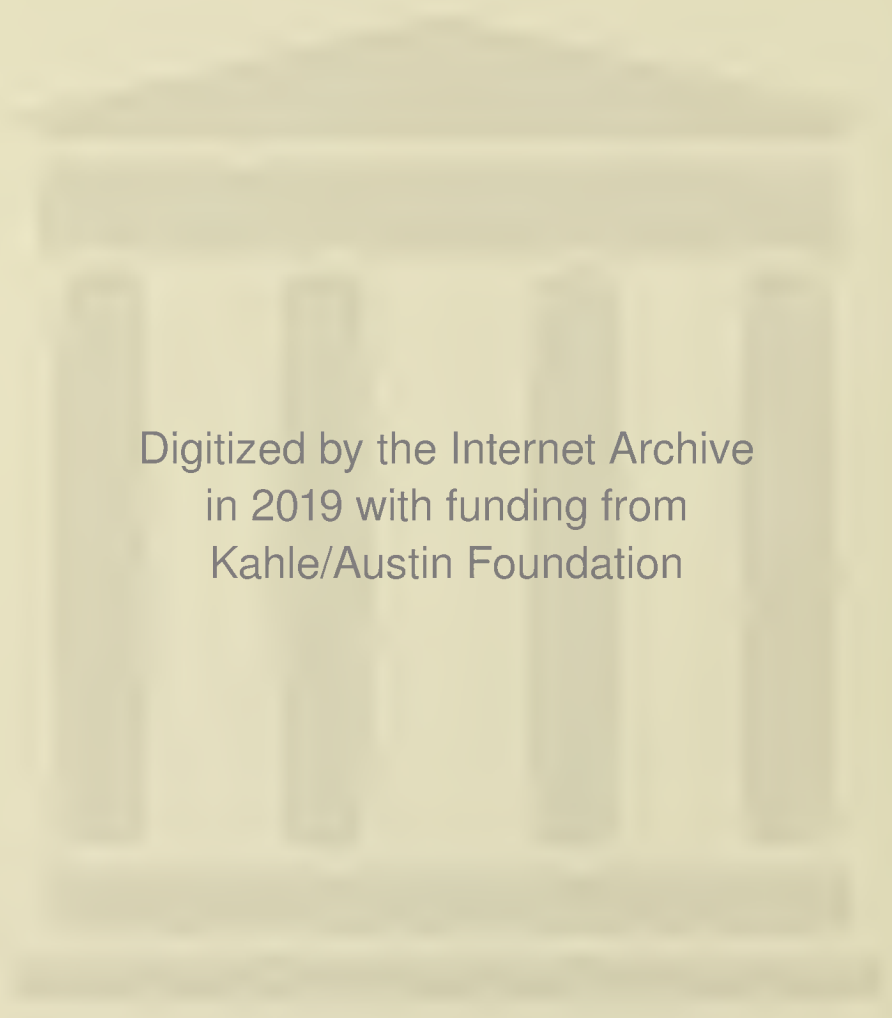


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# RANDALL JARRELL

by Karl Shapiro



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# RANDALL JARRELL

by **Karl Shapiro**

A lecture presented under the auspices  
of the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and  
Literature Fund, with a bibliography of  
Jarrell materials in the collections of  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Excerpts from "Moving" and "The State" in *Selected Poems* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1955) are reprinted by permission of Mrs. Jarrell.



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## RANDALL JARRELL

This lecture is not a eulogy, not a memorial, not one of those exercises in the objective perception of value for which the age of criticism is justly infamous. Randall Jarrell was not my friend; nor was he my enemy. But he was the poet whose poetry I admired and looked up to most after William Carlos Williams. This I said many times in many ways in my criticism. I praised his poetry more, and more wholeheartedly, than any other of his contemporaries. My praise, it may be, did not sit comfortably with him, for he spotted me as an outsider, or one who was constantly battling to get on the outside. Jarrell was very much an insider. There was a terrible conflict in his soul between his instinct for freedom and his desire for cultural asylum. This conflict gave him his style, his literary style, his life style. It is a style deceptively free. His bookplate might be the question mark. The most common and significant expression he uses at crucial points in his poetry and in his prose is *and yet . . .* I thought of naming this lecture "Randall Jarrell—And Yet" but I decided to be more ambitious. I shall try to situate Randall Jarrell among his fellows rather than doing his portrait. I think there is a message in his death, for me and for this generation.

Let me dispose of some personal data first, a few observations which will perhaps illumine my not too extensive relationship with him. When I was editing *Poetry* (Chicago) and after I had published hundreds—could it have been thousands?—of poets I noted that the manuscripts of Randall Jarrell, whether poems or prose, were

the only perfect manuscripts I ever saw. I mean that they were letter-perfect. There was no question of a typo or any other kind of graphical error. He was my only scrupulous poet, for most poets write the way they dress and their manuscripts look like somebody else's laundry, thank God. And this minor perfection of Jarrell's was reflected in the precision of thought, especially in his prose, which all the same sometimes took on a slightly euphuistic contour. I think *euphuistic* is the word; *baroque* describes certain of his stylistic processes, a style of inlay in which quotation is so exquisitely handled that everything Jarrell quotes sounds as if he wrote it. He was a great, you might say a dangerous, listener. And yet his style of reportage is comic, for he fears loftiness and bombast like the plague. One looks forward to the publication of his letters. We can be sure that the voice of the poet and of the cultural gossip is there. Charm is overwhelming in all his writing; *wit* is too platitudinous a word for his work, and the sharply outlined involutions of his thought deserve a better word than *wisdom*.

He gave a marvelous summation of contemporary poetry from this platform four years ago. I asked him if I could publish it in the *Prairie Schooner*, which I then edited. His reply was: "I'd be delighted for you to print the lecture in the *Prairie Schooner*. You've always been my favorite editor because you're not like an editor at all." I put the best construction on this remark that I could, especially as I knew it to be true, more than true, a complimentary reprimand of *my* style of life and letters. Except for an early merciless review of one of my books, he was always understanding about me—and acidulous. We were of the same group, so to speak, and had fought all the same wars, and he had a right to cry Whoa! when I came galloping by.

All the poets sat on the edge of their seats while Jarrell, who everybody had to admit had earned the right to do so, put together the jigsaw puzzle of modern poetry in front of our eyes. When I was finally fitted into place, with a splash of color, I felt a relief that I fitted, and a regret that that puzzle had been solved. I will repeat what he said of me because it is germane to my evaluation of Jarrell: "Karl Shapiro's poems are fresh and young and rash and live; their hard clear outlines, their flat bold colors create a world like that of a knowing and skillful neoprimitive painting, without any of the confusion or profundity of atmosphere, of aerial perspective, but with notable visual and satiric force." He then goes on to

mention my influences—Auden, Rilke, Whitman—and he does not need to say that these are also his influences, more his than mine, because Jarrell assimilated his Auden and Rilke and Whitman, along with his Corbière and Grimm and even Robert Frost. I assimilated nothing but was only influenced by. I rejected Influence out of hand and waged a one-man children's crusade against the Past, the Graeco-Judaic-Christian thingamajig, so that Jarrell could say of me with amused amazement: "Both in verse and in prose Shapiro loves, partly out of indignation and partly out of sheer mischievousness, to tell the naked truths or half-truths or quarter-truths that will make anybody's hair stand on end; he is always crying: 'But he hasn't any clothes on!' about an emperor who is half the time surprisingly well dressed." There is a slight concession here: Jarrell admits that the emperor is dressed like an emperor only half the time, while I contend that he is badly dressed even when he is naked.

I will be done with this "interrelationship" in a moment, but I am leading up to something important, a whole or half- or quarter-truth which I am bound to utter. I will read a poem I wrote about Jarrell; it is a prose-poem, as prosodists say when they run out of verbiage, and is in my last book. I don't remember Jarrell's reaction to the poem but I aimed to please him when I wrote it.

Randall, I like your poetry terribly, yet I'm afraid to say so.

Not that my praise keeps you awake—though I'm afraid it does. I can't help liking them. I even like the whine, the make-believe whiplash with the actual wire in it. Once when you reviewed me badly (you must) I wrote you: "I felt as if I had been run over but not hurt." That made you laugh. I was happy. It wasn't much of a triumph but it worked. When people ask about you I am inclined to say: He's an assassin (a word I never use). I'm inclined to say: Why are you always yourself? Your love of Rilke—if it's love—your intimacy with German and God knows what all, your tenderness and terrorization, your prose sentences—like Bernini graves, staggeringly expensive, Italianate, warm, sentences once-and-for-all. And the verses you leave half-finished in mid-air—I once knew a woman who never finished a sentence. Your mind is always at its

best, your craft the finest craft “money can buy” you would say with a barb. I’m afraid of you. Who wouldn’t be. But I rush to read you, whatever you print. That’s news.

And this is also news. I am quoting from the “News Notes” section of *Poetry* magazine of last May. “There was a public ceremony at Yale on February 28th to honor the memory of Randall Jarrell, who was killed last autumn in an automobile accident. John Barryman, Richard Eberhart, John Hollander, Stanley Kunitz, Robert Lowell, William Meredith, Adrienne Rich, Robert Penn Warren, Richard Wilbur, and Peter Taylor came together at Yale to participate in the tribute, for which the chairman was Norman Holmes Pearson. Mary Jarrell, widow of the poet, read ‘the last recently written poem that truly pleased him,’ ‘The Player Piano,’ as yet unpublished. The Yale *Daily News* reports that she ‘received an impassioned standing ovation as she walked to the lectern.’ Elizabeth Bishop, Cleanth Brooks, Robert Fitzgerald, Marianne Moore, John Crowe Ransom, and Allen Tate, who could not attend, sent testimonials which Professor Pearson read. . . .”

When I read this little notice in *Poetry* I was dismayed at my conspicuous absence from the list. Had Jarrell left it in his will to keep me off the Yale campus? Impossible. I had a blood-boiling moment of suspicion or paranoia that the Bollingen Committee or Professor Pearson or Robert Lowell had blackballed me from the club. My anti-cultural-committee activities span many years and I have tried to sabotage organized culture whenever possible; not always successfully of course. When the National Institute of Arts and Letters elected me as a member, I declined. But when their officers called me and said nobody had had that much cheek since Sinclair Lewis declined, and who the hell did I think I was, I chickened out and let them enroll me. When I went to watch the President sign the arts and humanities bill, some writer said: What are *you* doing here? Spying was all I could say. And now Randall had been organized in death by some cultural subcommittee and all I could think was: Now he knows what it feels like to turn over in his grave.

Between the instinct for freedom and the desire for cultural asylum others can make a choice, and always do. Culture committees love funerals. There is, even in one’s fellow poets, a touch

of the vulture: when the poet lies on the roof of the Tower of Silence you can hear the shuddering of ragged wings.

I remember once—I think it happened in the Poetry Office of this Library, but maybe it didn't happen at all and is just a memorable fancy—that Robert Lowell and Randall Jarrell were playing a game. The game was Who's First and it was Lowell's game. The idea is to grade the poets until the downgrading wipes most of the competition off the board. Two or three remaining contenders then engage in a death struggle. Jarrell played this game with a will but his winning instinct was no match for Lowell.

In Jarrell's bibliography published in 1958 there is a good introduction which contains this sentence: "Most critics predicted the emerging greatness of a Robert Lowell or a Karl Shapiro, but few guessed that Jarrell would outstrip them, especially in so short a time." This judgment is sound, as far as I am concerned, and certainly as far as Lowell is concerned. I'm not playing Who's First, I hope, because I don't think the game is worth my time or anyone else's. Comparisons of Lowell and Jarrell are irrelevant anyhow. Lowell is primarily a figurehead which he himself personally carved out of solid rock. The effort was immense, Churchillian in blood, sweat, and tears. But one feels that Lowell writes poetry to get even, while Jarrell became a poet because he couldn't help it.

Some years ago I volunteered to write an article for the *Evergreen Review* about Lowell. I said I would call it "Robert Lowell as T. S. Eliot." A while later I said I would change the title to "Robert Lowell as Cassius Clay." I finished up by not writing the article at all. It was not Lowell I was after but the maître d'hotel psychology of literature which Lowell espouses.

In the lecture which Jarrell gave here and which I published in the *Prairie Schooner* he says this of Lowell (I am paraphrasing): Robert Lowell is the poet of shock. His style manages to make even quotations and historical facts a personal possession. "Make it grotesque" could be his motto. (In the context Jarrell is contrasting Lowell with Richard Wilbur, a poet who makes poems out of the things of life rather than out of life itself.) Jarrell thought that Lowell possessed and wrote out of a life, yet he knew that this life was at least as unreal as Wilbur's life-by-virtue-of-the-things-of-life. Here is a direct quote: "Lowell has always had an astonishing ambition, a willingness to learn what past poetry was and to compete with it on its own terms." My comment is what Jarrell politely

implies, that competition is the sole inspiration of such a poet. Jarrell says in a parenthesis that Lowell bullied his early work, but his own vulnerable humanity has been forced in on him (a statement of tremendous humanity and pardon) with a shadow of fear above. Of Lowell's poems he mentions their stubborn toughness, their senseless originality (an expression to conjure with) and their contingency. Some of the poems justify the harshness and violence and what Jarrell calls their barbarous immediacy; he ends by complimenting Lowell, without having convinced us why, for his largeness and grandeur, and throws him a fish in this sentence: "You feel before reading any new poem of his the uneasy expectation of perhaps encountering a masterpiece." In an earlier treatment of Lowell in *Poetry and the Age* Jarrell wrote: "Cocteau said to poets: *Learn what you can do and then don't do it*; and this is so . . . As a poet Mr. Lowell sometimes doesn't have enough trust in God and tries to do everything himself . . . But probably the reader will want to say to me . . . what Lincoln said about the drunkard Grant: 'If I knew his brand I would order my other generals a barrel.' "

Our generation—the generation of Jarrell, Wilbur, myself, Roethke, Lowell, Schwartz, Bishop, Ciardi, Berryman, Kunitz, Nemerov, Whittmore—one is almost inclined to add Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith—our generation lived through more history than most or maybe any. We lived through more history even than Stendhal, who fell, as he says, with Napoleon. We were reared as intellectuals and fought the Second World War before it happened and then again when it did happen. We witnessed the god that failed and helped trip him up. We predicted the Alexandrianism of the age, and like everybody else, we thrived on it. We drove our foreign cars to class to teach. And we bit the hand that fed us, but not very hard, not hard enough. The hand went on signing papers. Once upon a time we were all revolutionaries of one stripe or another, but when we got married and settled down, with tenure, we talked technique instead of overthrow. Half of us stopped rebelling and not because of middle age. The age made it so easy to be a poet, or to survive on lobster, the age gave in so sweetly to our imprecations, the age so needed us to help it hate itself, this spineless age ended by softening the backbone of poetry. Dylan Thomas was the antisymbol of our group, that Dylan who died after he saw the faces of mice in the Bristol crystal. It was Thomas who taught poetry to stop thinking, and we resented that!



Though we were or are not all drunks and suicides, we had our goodly share. But all of us felt the rot of institutionalism in our bones. Jarrell got it down in a novel, the kind of novel the age demanded, the exposé of sensibility. Jarrell's novel, *Pictures From an Institution*, is so brilliant that it defeats itself as a fiction; it becomes a hornbook of avant-gardism, sophisticated to the point of philistinism. Jarrell is misleadingly philistine, say, about Modern Art of all varieties. It is because he is impatient with failure or imperfection or goofing around with the Muse. But this impatience of Jarrell's is also a veritable lust for perfection; and both the impatience and the philistinism are what you might call Texan. Jarrell was a good Texan in the sense that President Johnson is a bad Texan. *And yet*, what Jarrell does to Gertrude, his antiheroine in the novel, is almost beyond belief. Can anyone be that worthy of hatred? One wonders what Gertrude thought when she read her portrait. Gertrude is one of those savage southern female novelists who leaves the world in terror of the art of fiction. The setting of the novel is Benton, a very expensive higher education academy only six versts from Sarah Lawrence and/or Bennington. Benton's President Robbins doesn't fare any better than the loathed Gertrude, and the only lovable character in the book is a German-Jewish composer-in-residence named Rosenbaum. Jarrell attacks avant-garde institutionalism and everything it implies by immolating President Robbins and all his kinfolk in the way Gertrude might. He attacks dehumanized letters in his lip-smacking crucifixion of Gertrude. True humanity, true culture, true wisdom are preserved in the broken-English Rosenbaums.

Jarrell's love of the good German led him deep into the Black Forest, deep into German childhood. I shared with him his love for *Der Rosenkavalier*, for Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (who was not a very kosher German) and even for Mahler. Germany is the preconscious of Europe, almost all—no, all—her geniuses are maniacs, Germany itself is a maniac, the bright dangerous offspring of the Western soul. "Must you learn from your makers how to die?" Jarrell asks the war spirits in one of so many of his Germany-inspired poems. In a note to the poem "A Game at Salzburg" he says that there is a game that Austrians and Germans play with very young children. The child says to the grownup, *Here I am*, and the grownup answers, *There you are. Hier bin i': Da bist du*. Then Jarrell says: "It seemed to me that if there could be a con-

versation between the world and God, this would be it.” There is an almost unbearable sorrow in this colloquy, a German-Jewish sorrow, so to speak. Jarrell lets Dr. Rosenbaum say: “The people in Hell . . . say nothing but *What?*” To which Jarrell adds: “Americans in Hell tell each other how to make martinis.” I am not reviewing the novel but I give it a central place in Jarrell’s work as a kind of negative plate of the poetry. The empty intellectualism of America is pinpointed at Benton. The author says: “Nowadays Benton picked and chose: girls who had read Wittgenstein as high school baby-sitters were rejected because the school’s quota of abnormally intelligent students had already been filled that year.” Jarrell, not quite a Des Esseintes, suffers from a disillusionment of America which all our best artists share, suffers from the disappointment at the failure of the healing powers of poetry in this nation. Benton—American higher education—is only a rarer kind of custom-built Cadillac. One can almost begin to see the coat of arms emerging on the enameled door. One is already afraid of who is inside. He says, lapsing into what he thinks: “Is an institution always a man’s shadow shortened in the sun, the lowest common denominator of everybody in it?” It is bitter to answer yes, but so it is in the modern Institution. In his anthology of short Russian novels Jarrell quotes Turgenev on Tolstoy. Tolstoy “never believed in people’s sincerity. Every spiritual movement seemed to him false, and with his extraordinary penetrating eyes he used to pierce those on whom his suspicion fell.” The early Jarrell published the beginning of a massive attack on Auden, the most conspicuous idealist of the age. Later he forgave Auden, ideals and all.

Jarrell’s generation, my generation, inherited the question of Culture—Mass Culture versus True Culture. It is our *pons asinorum*, and we all had to cross it. Jarrell worried the problem more than most of us because he could not take for granted the purely elite esthetic of Eliot, the motto of which is High Culture Only: No Foreigners Allowed. Those of us who grew up with the *Partisan Review* on our kitchen tables and who wrote for it with great pride had a slightly altered version of High Culture. With us it was High Culture plus social revolution. We won the Second World War but lost the social revolution. We lost it to what Jarrell called the Medium, the Medium being a kind of symbol for mass culture. In the backwash of power and prosperity that engulfed America after our victory, the writers fled to those island citadels called Institutions.

Whether it was Benton or Harvard or Berkeley, each of these Mont St. Michels harbored its refugees from the world, from Mass Culture, from the Medium. Jarrell said the acceptably righteous things about Mass Culture, that mass culture either corrupts or isolates the writer, that “true works of art are more and more produced away from or in opposition to society.” And yet, he knew the writer’s need for contact with the mass and qualified his rejections of the Medium. Part of the artist, he said (I am quoting from *A Sad Heart at the Supermarket*, p. 84), “wants to be like his kind, is like his kind; longs to be loved and admired and successful.” Part of Jarrell longed to be accepted by the Medium but the thought of that depressed him. He asked “Is the influence of what I have called the Medium likely to lead us to any good life? to make us love and try to attain any real excellence, beauty, magnanimity? . . .” The answer has to be no. The middle-aged woman in the supermarket who buys All and Cheer and Joy for her gleaming washing machine sees only the image of death staring at her in her rearview mirror. Let me read this poem, which in my mind is already a famous poem.

#### NEXT DAY

Moving from Cheer to Joy, from Joy to All,  
I take a box  
And add it to my wild rice, my Cornish game hens.  
The slacked or shorted, basketed, identical  
Food-gathering flocks  
Are selves I overlook. Wisdom, said William James,  
Is learning what to overlook. And I am wise  
If that is wisdom.  
Yet somehow, as I buy All from these shelves  
And the boy takes it to my station wagon,  
What I’ve become  
Troubles me even if I shut my eyes.  
When I was young and miserable and pretty  
And poor, I’d wish  
What all girls wish: to have a husband,  
A house and children. Now that I’m old, my wish  
Is womanish:  
That the boy putting groceries in my car

See me. It bewilders me he doesn't see me.  
For so many years  
I was good enough to eat: the world looked at me  
And its mouth watered. How often they have  
undressed me,  
The eyes of strangers!  
And, holding their flesh within my flesh, their vile  
Imaginings within my imagining,  
I too have taken  
The chance of life. Now the boy pats my dog  
And we start home. Now I am good.  
The last mistaken,  
Ecstatic, accidental bliss, the blind  
Happiness that, bursting, leaves upon the palm  
Some soap and water—  
It was so long ago, back in some Gay  
Twenties, Nineties, I don't know . . . Today I miss  
My lovely daughter  
Away at school, my sons away at school,  
My husband away at work—I wish for them.  
The dog, the maid,  
And I go through the sure unvarying days  
At home in them. As I look at my life,  
I am afraid  
Only that it will change, as I am changing:  
I am afraid, this morning, of my face.  
It looks at me  
From the rear-view mirror, with the eyes I hate,  
The smile I hate. Its plain, lined look  
Of gray discovery  
Repeats to me: "You're old." That's all, I'm old.  
And yet I'm afraid, as I was at the funeral  
I went to yesterday,  
My friend's cold made-up face, granite among its  
flowers,  
Her undressed, operated-on, dressed body  
Were my face and body.  
As I think of her I hear her telling me

How young I seem; I *am* exceptional;  
I think of all I have.  
But really no one is exceptional,  
No one has anything, I'm anybody,  
I stand beside my grave  
Confused with my life, that is commonplace and  
solitary.

So in that life which is our Way, there is no excellence. But one wonders, to use Jarrell's pun on the great word *All*, if that is really all. When the prophets of High Culture (I called it Hi-Cult in one of my own essays) all died out, leaving only Dwight Macdonald to rave against the Medium and *Kitsch* and Camp and all those once fashionable diseases of the age; when Eliot fell in love and died, and Pound discovered silence—in short, when the twenties and thirties ended, it was already the sixties, and it had become hard to say where the Medium ended and the isolate poet began. How could a specialized study of the intellectual, say, *Herzog*, be a best-seller? What mass audience was it that picked that up? Even the woman in the supermarket quotes William James. The question with us, with Jarrell, was the probability of accepting the supermarket and its brightly packaged values. Or must one be an Allen Ginsberg and situate Walt Whitman in the supermarket, only to say: "See, I told you so! America has to start over from scratch."

In *Poetry and the Age*, one of the best handbooks of anticriticism we have, there is an essay on the obscurity of the poet. My edition of the book is dated 1955, a fatal year for pronouncements about the Audience, the year when some giant beast slouching toward the City Lights Bookshop gave birth to *Howl*. "Tomorrow morning," Jarrell was saying, "some poet may, like Byron, wake up to find himself famous—for having written a novel, for having killed his wife; it will not be for having written a poem." Jarrell was wrong; the whole generation was wrong about the Audience and the Poet; *Howl* gave us the lie. For myself, I was delighted and immediately sent in my resignation to my generation. They accepted it gingerly but with inquisitorial silence. In the same essay Jarrell had said that "The general public . . . has set up a criterion of its own, one by which every form of contemporary art is condemned." This statement, too, which had for so long been so widely accepted, was already obsolete. A decade after *Howl*—and

I see that poem as a symptom rather than as a cause—the general public itself has become the contemporary art audience. There are very few places in our geography anymore which resemble a Nebraska of the spirit; and in any case, philistinism today is no longer spontaneous but organized, political. Condemnation of the artist today is no longer mere provincialism; it is, to use a not very old-fashioned term, a form of fascism. And the general public, whatever that is, is choosing up sides. The Medium still dominates the sensory experience of the masses of people, but the Medium itself has become an initiate of Hi-Cult. The Medium has also had courses in modern poetry and electronic music.

The Berkeley or California Rebellion, like the Whiskey Rebellion, was a protest against a central culture. The California Rebellion struck out at every form of institutionalism it could clap eyes on. This too was a generational revolt and continues to be worldwide: it is, as most writers about it have noticed, more a sociological upheaval than a new motion in the arts. There is no innovation in Beat arts: the poetry stems from traditional rebel poets, Rimbaud, Pound, Whitman, Artaud. And the counterrevolt against Beatism stems from what was left over from the old guard elite and also from members of Jarrell's generation. Jarrell would not, I believe, commit himself to the new barbarians, as some writers call them; he could not; he was too urbane, too civilized, too much a lover of the perfect. I cannot imagine him favoring for any reason the later phase of Beat art, the jazz poetry of Bob Dylan and all those electric guitarists who carry their echo chambers with them wherever they go, portable Æolian winds, and whose motto seems to be Death By Motorcycle. Perhaps finally Jarrell recognized how much of an institution our generation had become, how much an institution he had become: I was in more of a position to face the music, the music of the electric guitar, because of my resignation. It was no surprise to me when I published a collection of essays called *In Defense of Ignorance* to receive a letter from a prominent member of our generation that complimented me highly on the book and said how much it was needed, a letter which ended, "but I would appreciate it if you didn't tell anybody." It was of course not Jarrell who penned this. Lowell questioned my adherence to William Carlos Williams. Williams is the godfather of *Howl*.

Jarrell's beautiful fable called *The Bat-Poet* is, like all true fables, open to various readings. A child can read it as well as a philosopher as well as a poet, each with the same comprehension. A little light brown bat leaves the pack to go out into the world of daylight to "hang there and think." The real bats don't understand the poet bat, who uses such things as colors in his poems, for the bat-poet is a poet. Busy work-a-night bats don't care for color and have no truck with poems. After trying out his poems on such creatures as the mockingbird, who criticizes the bat-poet's prosody and complains how hard it is to be a mockingbird; after failing to write a poem about the cardinal, who is perhaps too beautiful even for a poem; after bargaining with the chipmunk who is the bat-poet's most sympathetic critic (although naturally a poem about the owl gives the chipmunk the primordial Angst) the bat-poet writes his best poem about, of all things, a mother bat zig zagging through the night with her baby clinging to her body. The chipmunk decides that everything the bat does is upside down. At last the bat-poet decides to go and read his bat poem to the bats themselves, but when he gets to the barn where the bats collect, he has curiously forgotten his most important poem and just hangs upside down and goes to sleep like all the other bats.

Whether to be a bat or a poet: that is the question. Maybe the poets of Jarrell's and my generation were all hybrid bat-poets, going back to the institutional barn and then lighting off in broad sunlight to write poems about the righteous and dyspeptic mockingbird, the rich-bitch cardinal, the kindly and existential chipmunk, the owl who gets us all indiscriminately in his claws. When I got my first copy of *The Bat-Poet* I couldn't read it. The title and the drawings bothered me. It was the only thing of Jarrell's I didn't leap to read, and I gave my copy to a student. When I went to find a copy I found that my library at the University of Nebraska had never heard of it, that no bookstore in my part of the world had ever heard of it, that nobody I knew within hailing distance had ever heard of it, except that there was a mint copy in the State Capitol Building, which I obtained.

The basic assumption, the basic critical theorem, of our generation was that poetry didn't really *go* in this age, that the age demanded everything of the artist except his art, and that the poet was still declassified. Insofar as there was any truth in the assumption it was a minor truth. When Jarrell defended Robert Frost in calling

attention to "the other Frost" he was reminding his intellectual contemporaries that even a popular poet could make the grade. But Jarrell was really saying about Frost that he was a poet whose popularity was perhaps accidental. Conversely, Dylan Thomas, whom Jarrell thought correctly one of the most obscure poets of the age, was popular by default. It might be truer to say that Frost and Thomas were not only creative but also performing artists, not only performing artists but artists in action. Frost and Thomas lived their poetry, on stage and off; they were one with it, while our generation tended to hide or to collect in small conspiratorial groups. We barely learned to *read* poetry, because, as we said a little wearily, we *wrote* it. And because we wrote poetry that we were not necessarily committed to read, because we held to the cold North American delivery, we could seldom muster more than a token audience. Even Robert Frost, finally one of our great readers, insisted on the verb *say* for his recitations. Jarrell's bat-poet picks up the idiom: He says he is going to *say* a poem to the mockingbird. The opposite of *to say* is *to sing*, and even tone-deaf Yeats chanted his works. Pound revived a chant for the *Cantos*; it was one of the qualities that attracted him to the Beats. But the classroom voice and the High Church voice were dominant in the generation of Jarrell. And yet, what else were we to do in America, we argued, in a language which is inflected only in moments of violence? We shift between the nasal monotone and the double spondee. Jarrell is the one poet of my generation who made an art of American speech as it is, who advanced beyond Frost in using not only a contemporary idiom (although in Frost it is necessarily fictitious) but the actual rhythms of our speech. Here Jarrell is unique and technically radical. No other poet of our time has embalmed the common dialogue of Americans with such mastery. And because he caught our bourgeois speech he caught our meaning. Here is part of the marvelous essay-poem about, of all uncapturable things, Woman.

## WOMAN

"All things become thee, being thine," I think sometimes  
As I think of you. I think: "How many faults  
In thee have seemed a virtue!" While your taste is on my  
tongue



The years return, blessings innumerable  
As the breaths that you have quickened, gild my flesh.  
Lie there in majesty!

When, like Disraeli, I murmur  
That you are more like a mistress than a wife,  
More like an angel than a mistress; when, like Satan,  
I hiss in your ear some vile suggestion,  
Some delectable abomination,  
You smile at me indulgently: "Men, men!"

You smile at mankind, recognizing in it  
The absurd occasion of your fall.  
For men—as your soap operas, as your *Home Journals*,  
As your hearts whisper—men are only children.  
And you believe them. Truly, you are children.

Should I love you so dearly if you weren't?  
If I weren't?

O morning star,  
Each morning my dull heart goes out to you  
And rises with the sun, but with the sun  
Sets not, but all the long night nests within your eyes.

Men's share of grace, of all that can make bearable,  
Lovable almost, the apparition, Man,  
Has fallen to you. Erect, extraordinary  
As a polar bear on roller skates, he passes  
On into the Eternal . . .

From your pedestal, you watch  
Admiringly, when you remember to.

Let us form, as Freud has said, "a group of two."  
You are the best thing that this world can offer—  
He said so. Or I remember that he said so;  
If I am mistaken it's a Freudian error,  
An error nothing but a man would make.  
*Women* can't bear women. Cunningly engraved  
On many an old wife's dead heart is "Women,  
Beware women!" And yet it was a man  
Sick of too much sweetness—of a life  
Rich with a mother, wife, three daughters, a wife's sister,  
An abyss of analysands—who wrote: "I cannot

Escape the notion (though I hesitate  
To give it expression) that for women  
The level of what is ethically normal  
Is different from what it is in men.  
Their superego"—he goes on without hesitation—  
"Is never so inexorable, so impersonal,  
So independent of its emotional  
Origins as we require it in a man."

It is a long deep poem of a couple of hundred lines such as:

You call to me, "Come"; and when I come say, "Go,"  
Smiling your soft contrary smile . . .

—two lines packed with as much meaning as "The Death of the  
Ball Turret Gunner."

An age's poetry does not purify the dialect, or any of that nonsense which esthetic moralists believe, but an age's poetry fixes the age for those who care to gaze upon it in another age. Most of the poets of Jarrell's generation, when they were not simply describing, setting up the landscape of the city dump or suburbia or attacking the gleaming machinery of our brilliant kitchens, most of our poets dealt in minor points of ideology, lives of the saints or of boxers, or the symbolism of automobiles. Our technique was irony and nothing but irony, more kinds of irony than the Arabs have words for camel. But Jarrell, for all his indirection, spoke directly to the theme and in the direct idiom of our semiliterate educated classes. He listened like a novelist—I have already alluded to his ear—he heard the worst of us as well as the best. Things like iambic pentameter hypnotized him not. He used it as one sits in a Victorian chair in a friend's house, but how well he knew a Victorian chair when he saw one.

No one has ever caught a French writer or a German writer or an English or Irish or Scotch writer asking what a French, German, English, Irish, or Scotch writer is. But American writers ask practically nothing but what is an American writer, meaning what is an American? It is the great theme of American literature and in a sense the only one. Jarrell says, for instance, about Walt Whitman: "If some day a tourist notices, among the ruins of New York City, a copy of *Leaves of Grass*, and stops and picks it up and

reads some lines in it, she will be able to say to herself: 'How very American! If he and his country had not existed, it would have been impossible to imagine them.'"

Jarrell is almost as pro-American as Whitman himself. He applauds Marianne Moore's saying about America that it is not Niagara Falls, the calico horses, and the war-canoe that matter, nor the resources nor the know-how; "it is not the plunder,/ but 'accessibility to experience.'" He praises her Americanness and makes more famous the famed line about our language: "grassless/ linksless, languageless country in which letters are written/ not in Spanish, not in Greek, not in Latin, not in shorthand,/ but in plain American which cats and dogs can read!"

For *Paterson* (*Book I*) Jarrell reserved greater praise, predicting, because it was the most American poem ever, that it might become the "best very long poem that any American has written." *Paterson* didn't pan out that way, for Jarrell or for anyone else, but Williams did. Williams revealed America, New York on its horizon, "a pillar of smoke by day," says Jarrell, "a pillar of fire by night." Williams and Jarrell play with the remark of Henry James that America has no ruins. America is full of ruins, says Jarrell, the ruins of hopes.

M. B. Tolson, the great and practically unsung Negro poet—he too is dead—says somewhere in *Harlem Gallery* that the dilemma of the Negro between the white and the black bourgeoisie is: To be or not to be—a Negro. The Negro has a choice, is what Tolson argues, and he (and I) would rather the Negro become a Negro. But this dilemma does not exist for the paleface American: There is no choice of to be or not to be an American. Once an American, once an American poet, one can only ask: I am an American (or an American writer). Is there anything I can do about it? American poets even as late as Jarrell's generation tried to do something about it by remaining only as American as their passports demanded. A few of us, following Williams, wore the stars and stripes in secret, like *The Man Without a Country*. Jarrell and I are two of these. The generation of our fathers wore the flag with the cross of St. George or the flag of the stars and bars, and some of them sported the ribbon of the Legion of Honor and one or two the red, white, and black. None of my generation sported the iron cross, which one sees nowadays in dime stores in America for little boys to play

Nazi. But almost all of the generation of Jarrell at one time or another played Red or Pink.

The value and the quality of poetry, unfortunately or fortunately, have nothing to do with moral or political contents. *The Divine Comedy* is banned in Pakistan, or used to be, for religious reasons; modern art and poetry are or used to be banned in Red Russia, also for religious reasons. Sad to say, many poets are political or moral idiots, even among the great. In our own time we have to fight the tendencies which threaten what is dear to our own lives and ideologies. But in Jarrell's generation we were almost to a man humane humanists, and unlike our predecessors, were democratic in politics, agnostic in religion, and baroque in literature. Among us only Robert Lowell and myself could be described as extremists, and our extremism had different derivations and opposite goals. Jarrell suffered deeply through the Stalinist-Francoist-Mussolini-Hitler years, hoping against hope for a betterment in the human condition. His first book was called *Blood for a Stranger* and was printed in 1942, a war book. He retained only a few of these poems when thirteen years later he published his *Selected Poems*, but the themes of war and fascism—war as fascism—were always in his mind. Jarrell has written more good poems about the wars and about Jews and Germany, the good Germany perhaps, than anyone else. He has written also the most famous and the best war poem of anyone in the twentieth century, in five lines.

The volume called *Little Friend, Little Friend*, though it has some of his best-made single poems, is a thematic book, a war book in which the poet is personally absent. The title page carries the penetrating explanation of the poems, the pathos of modern war in the code language of flyers: “. . . Then I heard the bomber call me in: ‘Little Friend, Little Friend, I got two engines on fire. Can you see me, Little Friend?’ I said ‘I’m crossing right over you. Let’s go home.’”

The anguish of the soldier is shown less in his anonymity, his exile from the human race, than in his emotional sentimental desperation. The chief symbols—though Jarrell did not write to manipulate symbols qua symbols—are the mother and the cat. It is no Baudelairean cat (woman the destroyer), no T. S. Eliot cat (a kindly figure from the bestiary); Jarrell's cat is the object of love, if not a love-object, a cat who listens. The mother is pure mother who “thinks heavily: My son is grown.” That's all; he's grown,

therefore he is a soldier. The pilot falling from his plane sees the smoking carrier and its guns as children's toys. For it is true that in the elemental iconography of war everything is stripped down to a child's arithmetic: mother, soldier, cat, gun. There is a salient difference between our war poetry such as Jarrell's and that first great war poetry written in our father's war by Wilfred Owen and Sassoon and Rosenberg and Blunden and so on. The British war poets who showed everyone how to write antiwar poetry were themselves all outstanding warriors and heroes. They cried out against war but were as conversant with blood as Lawrence of Arabia. None of my generation were war heroes, that I remember, nor even outstanding soldiers. It says in a note in one of Jarrell's books that he "washed out" as a combat pilot and became a celestial navigator, a much more suitable classification for a poet. In a sense, we waited out the war in uniform. Jarrell's ball-turret gunner is also washed out—of the turret with a hose. Unlike the war poets of the First World War, who never recovered from the experience, our generation did. We inherited an historical perspective which was denied our fathers. We foresaw and witnessed the whole world turning into the state. The war was of secondary importance to us even while we were part of it. When we came home there was grass growing on all the highways of the forty-eight States but not for long. Our army went from demobilization to college or to television school; our poets became the university poets. But the tragedy of our generation—and I believe it is the tragedy—was that our army never melted away. It remained, it grew bigger, it was more and more all over the world. It became the way of life, the state—if not the garrison state itself, then something resembling it mightily. The war never came to a stop; only the protocols of armistice were suspended. Our poetry, from the forties on, records the helplessness we felt in the face of the impersonal character of the age—the Impersonal itself which is always death to poetry.

There is a literary commonplace that American literature is essentially a child literature. That *Moby Dick* is a boy's book—I was given a copy when I was seven—that every American hero is Huckleberry Finn in disguise, that poets are really little girls in mufti, that the artist has to prove his masculinity, and so on. A culture without mythos is forced into ideology. Whitman is an ideologue; his negation of mythology is one hundred percent

American. Our poets when they deal in the myths do as Jarrell did, following Rilke and other modern artists, analyze and psychologize Orestes or Orpheus. We understand without belief. This is the opposite of using comparative mythology in order to revive and enforce belief, as Eliot did. Our poetry studies behavior and leads us back to the child. With Jarrell too the child becomes the critic and the center of value. Our mythology is the First Impression, the earliest consciousness; all the big people are giants out of Grimm and most of them are bad. When a little girl is moving to a new house she thinks:

The broody hen  
Squawks upside down—her eggs are boiled;  
The cat is dragged from the limb.

She thinks:

We are going to live in a new pumpkin  
Under a gold star.

Theodore Roethke was a modern kind of nature poet, a biology poet with the eyes of a microscope. Jarrell was the poet of the *Kinder* and the earliest games of the mind and heart. All those wounded soldiers and shot-down men turn back into children, for a wounded man is again a child. In the poem called "The State" the child says:

When they killed my mother it made me nervous;  
I thought to myself, It was *right*:  
Of course she was crazy, and how she ate!  
And she died, after all, in her way, for the State.  
But I minded: how queer it was to stare  
At one of them not sitting there.

In his earliest collected work, one of those five-sided anthologies which New Directions invented to launch young poets, Jarrell worried the bone of Romanticism, trying to find a rationale for his departure from what he called Modernism. The crux of the problem of our generation was the Modernism which Eliot and Pound and Joyce represented and which Jarrell said did not apply to him or to us. He pretended that Modernism was dead but knew how well it would flourish in the academies. He catalogues the faults of Modernist poetry as well as has been done: the emphasis on connotation, texture, extreme intensity, forced emotion, violence, obscurity, emphasis on sensation, perceptual nuances, emphasis on the part rather than on the whole, and much more. He even

enumerates the Modernist poet's attitudes: antiscientific (Jarrell was one of the few poets of our age who was not antiscientific and who understood that science was not necessarily the intruder in the house), anticommonsense, and antipublic. He ends this essay, which is very early and very fine, with a touch of the style to come. He has his hypothetical reader ask him a question: ". . . the reader may have thought curiously, 'Does he really suppose he writes the sort of poetry that replaces modernism?'" And he replies with an ambiguous, a diplomatic, yes.

It was, say, Eliot, who is yet the most convenient target of attack for new poets, because Eliot erected targets wherever his mind led him; it was Eliot who invented Modernism and had it patented. And it was Auden who first shot at the target, and missed. Jarrell took care of Modernism in practice better than in theory, as later he took care of Auden. It became necessary for everyone my age to attack Auden, as sculptors must attack Mount Rushmore. Nevertheless, Auden and Mount Rushmore still stand and probably always will. Jarrell, I think, failed to help establish our generation as a separate force and simply, not so simply, went his way to write some of the most quietly agonizing poetry of our time. His overestimation of Lowell represented a kind of fear that, generationally speaking, we did not exist. He half feared being ingested by the Lowells. But I am a child, said Jarrell, I am the bat-poet; let me go and I will send you many much juicier poets. I will send you my mother and father and a fat girl in the library and even my cat. When John Ciardi put together an anthology of our generation with self-introductions, Lowell was too busy to write his (as I was too), and Jarrell reprinted his encomium about Lowell for Lowell's introduction. The roster of the generation in that version of it reads: Richard Wilbur, Peter Viereck, Muriel Rukeyser, Theodore Roethke, Karl Shapiro, Winfield Townley Scott, John Frederick Nims, E. L. Mayo, Robert Lowell, Randall Jarrell, John Holmes, Richard Eberhart, John Ciardi, Elizabeth Bishop, and Delmore Schwartz. It is an impressive list, in my view, a loose confederation of states which had no president.

I must say something about Schwartz. Dwight Macdonald wrote a memorial about him in the September 8 issue of *The New York Review of Books*. In it he said all the things an editor of the *Partisan Review* should say, all the Hi-Cult clichés which the *Partisan Review* takes as gospel. It is strange, to say the least, that this great pub-

lication, one of the great intellectual quarterlies of our century, should always have been so obtuse about poetry, as if (which I believe was the trouble) they didn't understand it. They took a Stalinist view of poetry, which is that poetry should go back where it came from, and then modified that view with Trotsky's rather nineteenth-century bohemian view of poetry, which reminds one, touchingly, of perhaps Verlaine. They could swallow the *Four Quartets* hook, line, and sinker and turn on the Beat poets like the OGPU. Macdonald, politically brilliant, a jaded libertarian with the old Marxist leadership principle in his heart, Macdonald says that Schwartz was killed by America, a statement that wouldn't stand up five minutes in a provincial psychiatrist's office, any more than that same college cheer that went: America killed Dylan. Macdonald says: "Poetry is a dangerous occupation in this country, as the biographers of too many of our best twentieth-century poets show, from Ezra Pound on, including the recent deaths of Randall Jarrell and Theodore Roethke. This is not a new thing. . . ." and then Macdonald launches into Baudelaire on Poe. ("For Poe the United States was nothing more than a vast prison . . ." and so forth.) This dismal, sociologically oriented view of poetry (now being taught in junior high but no further) was shared neither by Schwartz nor Jarrell nor myself nor by any of the other poets I know of. Whether poetry is a more dangerous occupation in America than tree surgery or insurance salesmanship is hard to say. Macdonald points to Delmore Schwartz's tremendous urge toward self-destruction but contents himself with the easy out that America got Delmore. It is one of those facile esthetic lies which lead to the formation of poetry committees.

There is this about Schwartz as about Jarrell. Both refused that lie; and both were tormented by the strategy of escaping from the elite committees which survive by virtue of the lie. Macdonald, discussing his friendship for Schwartz, cites the Jewish-Gentile difference between them, as if this were an area of misunderstanding for an editor of the *Partisan Review* or even *McCall's*. Jarrell, unlike Schwartz, did not become a part of *PR*, although he edited poetry and did the poetry reviews for the *Nation*, a magazine which is intellectually unidentifiable. The *Nation* in our time was more congenial to poetry than the great quarterlies, which always subordinated the poem to the ideology of the magazine. Jarrell wrote some of his best critiques for the *Nation*, in that kindly intellectual



morass where one was allowed to Become rather than Be. In the quarterlies one must have already arrived.

So, after all, Jarrell was hung up, as we all were, by the sense of commonsense, Thomas Paine's or Henry Ford's or the scientist's. And after all, Macdonald has a truth in his craw, that poetry (he meant I think *being* a poet) is dangerous. In danger would be a better phrase, as children are in danger. It comes to the sadness about us that poets are not loved or are loved in the wrong way for the right reasons or—whatever that saying is. It comes to the fact that America the Mother wants to love her children but is much more successful at killing them off, or just making them successful. Jarrell had a brilliant, sure, and subtle mind, and would have been the greatest poet since whoever the last great poet was, had he not lacked the sense of power. He lacked it, to his disaster. It is what you might call a psychological factor, *the* psychological factor. He came of a generation that could not hate Mother America but which was afraid of her and for her. There is no one of our generation who betrayed her or who tried to topple the Victorian Statue of Liberty into the drink. Jarrell was the least anti-American of all of us, and the most. He recoiled from the boredom and the horror and the glory of the day-to-day life. But what he did in his poetry, which had never really been done before, was to face the modern scene and to—what more is there to say—to face it. He faced the music of the American Way of Life. But the subject wasn't anything that Dwight Macdonald would know about, because the elites never stoop to the observation of the actual. It wasn't anything that the power-mad poets would ever see, because they are so busy climbing Mount Everest that they don't know what millenium they are in. Jarrell tried to do the impossible: to observe and make poetry of a chaos, without being either inside or outside of it. He did it better than anyone else, better than it can be done. He did it passionately and with superb control. He did it with lies and subterfuge and great prose. He did it by hiding and spying, reporting and keening. I would imagine that he wept himself to death, out of frustration for the Kafka-like manias of our time, including those of the intellegentsia; out of the ambition which he denied himself because he was more intelligent than any of us; out of the love of the natural which denies the political. He died, you might say, because his heart was in the right place and his heart was even stronger than his intellect. Jarrell was split between

his heart and mind. He was modern, which means hating being modern. He was born after Humpty-Dumpty fell off the wall, and he knew that T. S. Eliot scotch tape couldn't put anything back together again.

That is all I have to say. Thank you.

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## KEY TO SYMBOLS

DLC . . . . .	Library of Congress (uncataloged).
M Pic . . . . .	Motion Picture Section.
Micro . . . . .	Microfilm Reading Room.
Mss . . . . .	Manuscript Division.
Newsp . . . . .	Newspaper Reading Room.
P&GP RR . . . . .	Periodical and Government Publications Reading Room.
Poetry . . . . .	Poetry Room.
Rec . . . . .	Recording Laboratory.

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Reprinted in *The Partisan Reader, 1934–1944*, edited by William Phillips and Philip Rahv (New York, Dial Press, 1946), p. 239–240. PN6014.P25

46

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AP2.A426, v. 3

47

Old poems. *Southern review* (Baton Rouge), v. 2, autumn 1936: 377.

AP2.S8555, v. 2

48

An old song. *Southern review* (Baton Rouge), v. 2, autumn 1936: 379.

AP2.S8555, v. 2

- 49  
Overture: the hostages. *Kenyon review*, v. 9, autumn 1947: 509.  
AP2.K426, v. 9
- 50  
A perfectly free association. *Nation*, v. 168, Apr. 30, 1949: 503.  
AP2.N2, v. 168
- 51  
The player piano. *In North Carolina. University, Greensboro.*  
*Alumni news*, v. 54, spring 1966: 25. Poetry
- 52  
The princess wakes in the wood. *Poetry (Chicago)*, v. 77, Dec.  
1950: 148-149. PS301.P6, v. 77
- 53  
Scherzo. *Partisan review*, v. 11, winter 1944: 99. HX1.P3, v. 11
- 54  
The sign. Drawing by Bert Carpenter. [Greensboro?] Printed at  
the Chapman Press, 1966. broadside. 35 x 26 cm. DLC  
"A Keepsake for the Friends of the Library of the University of North Carolina  
at Greensboro, April 20, 1966: courtesy of Mrs. Randall Jarrell."
- 55  
The street has changed. *Sewanee review*, v. 53, summer 1945: 428.  
AP2.S5, v. 53
- 56  
Time and the thing-in-itself in a textbook. *Poetry (Chicago)*, v. 60,  
May 1942: 73-74. PS301.P6, v. 60
- 57  
To the new world. *Sewanee review*, v. 53, summer 1945: 426.  
AP2.S5, v. 53
- 58  
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AP2.K426, v. 13
- 59  
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v. 3, autumn 1937: 393. AP2.S8555, v. 3

60

Zeno. *New republic*, v. 81, Dec. 26, 1934: 184–185.

AP2.N624, v. 81

## ESSAYS AND BOOK REVIEWS

61

About American poetry: an interview with Randall Jarrell. [Interviewed by] Nathan Glick. *Analects*, v. 1, spring 1961: 5–10.

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62

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N1.A6, v. 56

63

Answers to questions. *In* Ciardi, John, *ed.* *Mid-century American poets*. New York, Twayne [1950] p. 182–184. PS614.C515

64

The appalling taste of the age. *Saturday evening post*, v. 231, July 26, 1958: 18–19, 44–45, 47–48. port. AP2.S2, v. 231

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65

Aristotle alive! *Saturday review*, v. 37, Apr. 3, 1954: 29–30.

Z1219.S25, v. 37

66

B. H. Haggin. *Nation*, v. 169, Dec. 17, 1949: 599–600.

AP2.N2, v. 169

67

Brief comments. *American scholar*, v. 29, autumn 1960: 576, 578.

AP2.A4572, v. 29

68

Changes of attitude and rhetoric in Auden's poetry. *Southern review*, (Baton Rouge), v. 7, autumn 1941: 326–349. AP2.S8555, v. 7

69

The collected poems of Wallace Stevens. Yale review, v. 44, spring 1955: 340–353. AP2.Y2, v. 44

70

Contemporary poetry criticism. New republic, v. 105, July 21, 1941: 88–90. AP2.N624, v. 105

71

Corrective for critics. New York times book review, v. 52, Aug. 24, 1947: 14. AP2.N657, v. 52

72

Critical scholars. New republic, v. 105, Oct. 6, 1941: 439. AP2.N624, v. 105

Reply to a letter from David Daiches, published in the *New Republic* (v. 105, Aug. 18, 1941: 223), commenting on “Contemporary Poetry Criticism” (item 70).

73

The development of Yeats’s sense of reality. Southern review (Baton Rouge), v. 7, winter 1942: 653–666. AP2.S8555, v. 7

74

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75

The end of the line. Nation, v. 154, Feb. 21, 1942: 222, 224, 226, 228. AP2.N2, v. 154

A revised version appears in *Literary Opinion in America*, rev. ed., edited by Morton D. Zabel (New York, Harper [1951] PN771.Z2 1951), p. 742–748; and in a 3d ed., rev., of the same work, v. 2 (New York, Harper & Row [1962] PN771.Z2 1962), p. 742–748.

76

Ernie Pyle. Nation, v. 160, May 19, 1945: 573–576. AP2.N2, v. 160

77

The fall of the city. Sewanee review, v. 51, spring 1943: 267–280. AP2.S5, v. 51

78

Fifty years of American poetry. *Prairie schooner*, v. 37, spring 1963: 1–27. AP2.P85285, v. 37

Reprinted in the *Proceedings* of the National Poetry Festival (Washington, Library of Congress, 1964), p. 113–138. PS301.N3 1962

79

Five poets. *Yale review*, v. 46, autumn 1956: 100–110.

AP2.Y2, v. 46

80

Four Shakespeare plays. *Hi fi/stereo review*, v. 7, Aug. 1961: 42–44. ML1.H43, v. 7

81

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82

From that island. *Kenyon review*, v. 1, autumn 1939: 468–471.

AP2.K426, v. 1

83

Go, man, go! *Mademoiselle*, v. 45, May 1957: 98–99, 140–143.

AP2.M2334, v. 45

84

Good fences make good poets. *Book week*, v. 1, Aug. 30, 1964: 1, 10. Z1007.B71685, v. 1

85

Graves and the white goddess. *Yale review*, v. 45, winter-spring 1956: 302–314, 467–480. AP2.Y2, v. 45

86

Harmony, discord and taste. *New York times book review*, v. 61, June 17, 1956: 7. AP2.N657, v. 61

87

In all directions. *Partisan review*, v. 9, July/Aug. 1942: 345–347.

HX1.P3, v. 9

88

In pursuit of beauty. *New York times book review*, v. 62, Mar. 10, 1957: 5. AP2.N657, v. 62

89

A job lot of poetry. *New republic*, v. 103, Nov. 11, 1940: 667–668.  
AP2.N624, v. 103

90

Kafka's tragi-comedy. *Kenyon review*, v. 3, winter 1941: 116–119.  
AP2.K426, v. 3

91

A literary tornado. *New York times book review*, v. 60, Apr. 17, 1955: 4.  
AP2.N657, v. 60

92

The little cars. *Vogue*, v. 124, Sept. 15, 1954: 128–129.  
TT500.V7, v. 124

93

Love and poetry. *Mademoiselle*, v. 42, Feb. 1956: 123, 223–225.  
AP2.M2334, v. 42

94

A matter of opinion. *New York times book review*, v. 60, May 29, 1955: 5.  
AP2.N657, v. 60

95

Mr. Jarrell replies. *New republic*, v. 104, Mar. 17, 1941: 374–375.  
AP2.N624, v. 104

Comments on "Poets as Reviewers," an article by Malcolm Cowley in the *New Republic*, v. 104, Feb. 24, 1941: 281–282.

96

The morality of Mr. Winters. *Kenyon review*, v. 1, spring 1939: 211–215.  
AP2.K426, v. 1

97

The new books. "Very graceful are the uses of culture." *Harper's magazine*, v. 209, Nov. 1954: 94, 96, 98, 100, 102–104.  
AP2.H3, v. 209

98

New year letter. *Nation*, v. 152, Apr. 12, 1941: 440–441.  
AP2.N2, v. 152

99

No love for Eliot. *New York times book review*, v. 56, Nov. 18, 1951: 36.  
AP2.N657, v. 56

100

On the underside of the stone. *New York times book review*, v. 58, Aug. 23, 1953: 6. AP2.N657, v. 58

101

Poems by Corbiere. *New York times book review*, v. 52, Sept. 28, 1947: 5. AP2.N657, v. 52

102

Poetry in a dry season. *Partisan review*, v. 7, Mar./Apr. 1940: 164–167. HX1.P3, v. 7

Reprinted in *The Partisan Reader, 1934–1944*, edited by William Phillips and Philip Rahv (New York, Dial Press, 1946), p. 629–633. PN6014.P25

103

Poetry in war and peace. *Partisan review*, v. 12, winter 1945: 120–126. HX1.P3, v. 12

104

Poetry, unlimited. *Partisan review*, v. 17, Feb. 1950: 189–193. HX1.P3, v. 17

105

Poets: old, new and aging. *New republic*, v. 103, Dec. 9, 1940: 797–798, 800. AP2.N624, v. 103

106

A poet's own way. *New York times book review*, v. 59, Oct. 31, 1954: 6. AP2.N657, v. 59

Reprinted in *'Eστi: e e c; E. E. Cummings and the Critics*, edited by Stanley V. Baum (East Lansing, Michigan State University Press [1962]), p. 191–192. PS3505.U334Z56

107

'The poet's store of grave and gay.' *New York times book review*, v. 59, Aug. 15, 1954: 5. AP2.N657, v. 59

108

The profession of poetry. *Partisan review*, v. 17, Sept./Oct. 1950: 724–731. HX1.P3, v. 17

Reprinted as "Reflections on Wallace Stevens and e. e. cummings" in *The New Partisan Reader, 1945–1953*, edited by William Phillips and Philip Rahv (New York, Harcourt, Brace [1953]), p. 408–421. PN6014.P24

- 109  
Recent poetry. Yale review, v. 44, summer 1955: 598–608.  
AP2.Y2, v. 44
- 110  
Recent poetry. Yale review, v. 45, autumn 1955: 122–132.  
AP2.Y2, v. 45
- 111  
Recommended summer reading. American scholar, v. 27, summer 1958: 372.  
AP2.A4572, v. 27
- 112  
The rhetoricians. New republic, v. 104, Feb. 17, 1941: 221–222.  
AP2.N624, v. 104
- 113  
Robert Frost's "Home Burial." In Allen, Don C., ed. The moment of poetry. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press [1962] (The Percy Graeme Turnbull memorial lectures on poetry, 1961) p. 99–132.  
PN1064.A5 1962
- 114  
The "serious" critic. Nation, v. 166, June 12, 1948: 670–672.  
AP2.N2, v. 166  
Reply to a letter from Conrad Aiken, published in the same issue, attacking Jarrell's review of new poetry in the *Nation*, v. 166, May 8, 1948: 512–513. Part of this review is reprinted in *Poetry and the Age* (item 12).
- 115  
Songs of rapture, songs of death. New York times book review, v. 61, Nov. 25, 1956: 5, 50.  
AP2.N657, v. 61
- 116  
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AP2.N657, v. 60
- 117  
Ten books. Southern review (Baton Rouge), v. 1, autumn 1935: 397–410.  
AP2.S8555, v. 1
- 118  
"Tenderness and passive sadness." New York times book review, v. 52, June 1, 1947: 4.  
AP2.N657, v. 52



119

Texts from Housman. Kenyon review, v. 1, summer 1939: 260–271.  
AP2.K426, v. 1

120

These are not Psalms. Commentary, v. 1, Nov. 1945: 88–90.  
DS101.C63, v. 1

121

To fill a wilderness. Nation, v. 173, Dec. 29, 1951: 570.  
AP2.N2, v. 173

122

An unread book. In Stead, Christina. The man who loved children. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston [1965] p. v–xli.  
PZ3.S7986Man3

Reprinted in part in the *Atlantic Monthly*, v. 215, Mar. 1965: 166–171.  
AP2.A8, v. 215

123

Verse chronicle. Nation, v. 166, Mar. 27, 1948: 360–361.  
AP2.N2, v. 166

124

Verse chronicle. Nation, v. 167, July 17, 1948: 80–81.  
AP2.N2, v. 167

125

With Berlioz, once upon a time . . . New York times book review,  
v. 61, Apr. 15, 1956: 3. AP2.N657, v. 61

126

The year in poetry. Harper's magazine, v. 211, Oct. 1955: 96–101.  
AP2.H3, v. 211

## WORKS EDITED BY RANDALL JARRELL

127

The Anchor book of stories; selected and with an introduction by  
Randall Jarrell. [1st ed.] Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1958.  
330 p. (Doubleday Anchor books, A145) PZ3.J3An

Introduction: p. [ix]–xxii.

128

Kipling, Rudyard. The best short stories of Rudyard Kipling. Edited by Randall Jarrell. [1st ed.] Garden City, N.Y., Hanover House [1961] 693 p. PZ3.K629Bh

“On Preparing to Read Kipling”: p. [vii]–xix.

129

Kipling, Rudyard. The English in England, short stories. Selected and with an introduction by Randall Jarrell. Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books, 1963. 338 p. (A Doubleday Anchor original) PZ3.K629En

Introduction: p. [v]–xv.

130

Kipling, Rudyard. In the vernacular: the English in India; short stories. Selected and with an introduction by Randall Jarrell. Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1963. 291 p. (Anchor books) PZ3.K629Inb

Introduction: p. [v]–xix.

131

Six Russian short novels: The overcoat; Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk district; a Lear of the steppes; Master and man; The death of Ivan Ilych; Ward no. 6. Selected, with an introduction by Randall Jarrell. [1st ed.] Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday [1963] 361 p. (Anchor books, A348) PZ1.J3Si

Introduction: p. [vii]–xxxvi.

## TRANSLATIONS BY RANDALL JARRELL

132

Bechstein, Ludwig. The rabbit catcher, and other fairy tales. Translated and introduced by Randall Jarrell. Illustrated by Ugo Fontana. New York, Macmillan, 1962 [1961] 32 p. PZ8.B384Rab2

“Bechstein’s Tales”: p. iii–v.

133

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. Faust. The first part of the tragedy. Southern review (Baton Rouge), new ser., v. 1, July 1965: 574-589. AP2.S8555, n.s., v. 1

134

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. Faust, Scene I. Quarterly review of literature, v. 11, no. 2/3, 1961: 199-215. AP2.Q29, v. 11

135

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. A scene from "Faust, Part I." Analects, v. 1, spring 1961: 29-36. P&GP RR

136

Gregorovius, Ferdinand Adolf. Lament of the children of Israel in Rome. Commentary, v. 5, Feb. 1948: 171-172. DS101.C63, v. 5  
Reprinted in *The Ghetto and the Jews of Rome*, by Gregorovius (New York, Schocken Books [1948]), p. [9]-16. DS135.I85R633

137

Grimm, Jakob Ludwig Karl, and Wilhelm Karl Grimm. The golden bird, and other fairy tales of the brothers Grimm. Translated and introduced by Randall Jarrell. Illustrated by Sandro Nardini. [Milano] Fratelli Fabbri [1962] 48 p. PZ8.G882Gfh 8  
"Grimm's Tales": p. iii-vi.

138

Mörike, Eduard Friedrich. The forsaken girl. Ladies' home journal, v. 69, Sept. 1952: 101. AP2.L135, v. 69

139

Radauskas, Henrikas. The fire at the waxworks. Literary review (Teaneck, N.J.), v. 8, spring 1965: 323. AP2.L6377, v. 8

140

Radauskas, Henrikas. In a hospital garden. Literary review (Teaneck, N.J.), v. 8, spring 1965: 324. AP2.L6377, v. 8

141

Rilke, Rainer Maria. The blind man's song. Poetry (Chicago), v. 101, Oct./Nov. 1962: 53. PS301.P6, v. 101

# MANUSCRIPTS

## Harper's Magazine Collection

142

The new books. "Very graceful are the uses of culture." [1954]  
16 l. Typescript with holograph corrections and editorial marks.  
Mss

Review published in *Harper's Magazine* for November 1954 (see item 97).

143

Letter to John Fischer, editor-in-chief of *Harper's Magazine*, New York, N.Y. Greensboro, N.C. [November 1954] 5 p. on 3 l. 18 x 15 cm. Holograph, signed. Mss

Offers to write a "longish" piece on Marianne Moore and lists several other poets he would like to write about.

144

Letter to Mrs. Katherine Gauss Jackson, editor of *Harper's Magazine*. [Greensboro, N.C., early December 1954] 2 p. on 1 l. 28 x 22 cm. Holograph, signed. Mss

Refuses her "flattering" offer to review books for one year. ". . . I am mainly a poet and poetry critic and writer of a peculiar sort of fiction." Promises to go ahead with the Marianne Moore article but indicates that he will need four thousand words to portray his subject properly.

145

Letter to Mrs. Jackson. [Greensboro, N.C., mid-December 1954] 3 p. on 2 l. 28 x 22 cm. Holograph, signed. Mss

Refuses her counteroffer of reviewing poetry every other month for one year. Feels it would take up too much of his time. Expresses intention of talking with Miss Moore soon in connection with his article.

146

Telegram to Mrs. Jackson. Hyannis, Mass., July 8, 1955. 1 l. Mss

Replies to Mrs. Jackson's offer by saying that he would be delighted to do a short article on the poets and poetry of 1955.

147

Letter to Mrs. Jackson. Dennis, Cape Cod, Mass., August 14, 1955. 2 p. on 1 l. 18 x 15 cm. Holograph, signed. Mss

Accompanies his article on the poets and poetry of 1955.

148

The year in poetry. [1955] 7 l. Typescript with holograph corrections and editorial marks. Mss

Review published in *Harper's Magazine* for October 1955 (see item 126).

## National Poetry Festival Papers, 1962

149

Fifty years of American poetry. [1962] 29 l. Typescript (carbon copy) with typed corrections and additions. Mss

Draft of a speech given at the Library of Congress on October 22, 1962. The text was published in the *Prairie Schooner* and in the *Proceedings* of the National Poetry Festival (see item 78).

150

Document. October 21, 1962. 1 l. Near-print, signed. Mss

Gives permission to the Library of Congress to distribute recordings of the National Poetry Festival to educational and cultural institutions which ask for them and grants permission for the United States Information Agency to make the recordings available to its overseas branches.

151

The Jarrell file. March 21, 1962–February 28, 1963. 23 items.

Mss

Correspondence between officials of the Library of Congress and Mr. Jarrell concerning his appearance at the festival. Includes four holograph signed letters from Mr. Jarrell; outlines of the proposed program, showing the development of Mr. Jarrell's contribution from a 15–20-minute speech to an hour-long major address; requests for a signed holograph manuscript and a photograph for exhibition purposes; reply to a request from Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Presidential Assistant, for copies of Mr. Jarrell's speech; and requests for permission to reprint Mr. Jarrell's poetry in the *Proceedings* of the festival.

## RECORDINGS

### Phonodiscs

152

Randall Jarrell reading his own poems. Library of Congress, Recording Laboratory album P5 (record P24) [1949] 2 s. 12 in.

78 rpm. (U.S. Library of Congress. Reference Dept. Twentieth century poetry in English, contemporary recordings of the poets reading their own poems) Rec

Recorded at the Library of Congress, 1947.

Biobibliographical notes and texts (leaflet) inserted in album.

Contents: Lady Bates. Stalag Luft.

153

Poets reading their own poems. Library of Congress, Recording Laboratory PL 7. [1954] 2 s. 12 in. 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm. microgroove. ([U.S. Library of Congress. Reference Dept.] Twentieth century poetry in English, contemporary recordings of [the] poets reading their own poems) Rec

Biobibliographical notes and texts (4 leaflets) inserted in slipcase.

Partial contents: Lady Bates. Stalag Luft. By Randall Jarrell (recorded at the Library of Congress, 1947).

## Magnetic Tapes

154

Reading his own poetry in the Recording Laboratory, June 9, 1947. 10 in. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. per sec. (LWO 2689, reel 6) Rec

Contents: Variations [I-IV]. The place of death. Oh my name it is Sam Hall. New Georgia. A camp in the Prussian Forest. Jews at Haifa. The boyg, Peer Gynt, the one only one. The emancipators. The death of the ball turret gunner. The state. The snow leopard. The wide prospect. Losses. Eighth Air Force. A field hospital. Siegfried. A pilot from the carrier. The dead wingman. New Georgia [rereading]. Pilots, man your planes. A camp in the Prussian Forest [rereading]. Gunner. Terms. A ward in the States. The lines. The state [rereading].

155

Reading his own poetry in the Recording Laboratory, November 28, 1947. 10 in. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. per sec. (LWO 2689, reels 5 & 6) Rec

Contents: Terms. Money. Moving. A country life. The rising sun. The child of courts. The breath of night. Burning the letters. Lady Bates. Stalag Luft.

156

Reading his poetry in the Recording Laboratory, March 29 and 30, 1948. 10 in. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. per sec. (LWO 2689, reel 6) Rec

Contents: Losses. Eighth Air Force. A field hospital. Stalag Luft. The dead wingman. New Georgia. A camp in the Prussian Forest. The death of the ball turret gunner. The lines. The state.

157

Reading some of his poems from *The seven-league crutches*, in the home of Donald Stauffer, Princeton, N.J., September 28, 1951. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 1963, reel 1) Rec

Contents: Transient barracks: 1944. A game at Salzburg. A girl in a library. A conversation with the devil. The truth. Seele im Raum. The night before the night before Christmas.

158

Lecture entitled "The taste of the age," presented in the Coolidge Auditorium, December 17, 1956. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 2516) Rec

159

Lecture entitled "Poets, critics, and readers," presented in the Coolidge Auditorium, October 28, 1957. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 2609) Rec

160

Wilbur, Richard. Reading his poems with commentary in the Recording Laboratory, December 2, 1957. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 2623) Rec

Includes discussion between Mr. Wilbur and Randall Jarrell.

161

Ransom, John Crowe. Reading his poems and discussing them with Randall Jarrell in the Recording Laboratory, January 14, 1958. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 2628) Rec

162

Frost, Robert. Interviewed by Randall Jarrell in the Recording Laboratory, May 19, 1959. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 2849) Rec

Tape box autographed by both poets.

163

Reading his poetry at the second Johns Hopkins Poetry Festival, October 25, 1961. 1 reel (7 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 3558) Rec

Contents: Translations from Rilke—The blind man's song; Washing the corpse; Childhood. The lines. Eighth Air Force. Transient barracks. The death of the ball turret gunner. The woman at the Washington Zoo. Cinderella. The bronze David of Donatello.

164

Lecture entitled "Fifty years of American poetry," presented at the National Poetry Festival, evening session, October 22, 1962. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 3868, reel 3) Rec

165

Reading his poetry at the National Poetry Festival, afternoon session, October 24, 1962. 10 in. 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 3870, afternoon session, reel 1) Rec

Contents: Translation from Rilke—The blind man's song. Losses. Eighth Air Force. Cinderella. The woman at the Washington Zoo.

166

Reading his poems and those of Elizabeth Bishop, with commentary, at the Guggenheim Museum, New York City, October 29, 1964, under the auspices of the Academy of American Poets. Introduction and commentary by Robert Lowell. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 4868) Rec

Contents: By Elizabeth Bishop—The fish; The man-moth; The prodigal; Manuelzinho; Rain towards morning; At the fishhouses; The armadillo. By Randall Jarrell—In Montecito; Next day; A well-to-do invalid; A street off Sunset; Three bills; The player piano.

167

Interviewed by Edythe Walton, January 29, 1965, for her program "Speak up," broadcast over WNBC Radio, New York City, February 4, 1965. 1 reel (10 in.). 7½ in. per sec. (LWO 4861) Rec

## MOTION PICTURES

168

North Carolina books and authors: Mr. Randall Jarrell. WUNC Television, 1960. Released under the auspices of the North Carolina State Committee of National Library Week. 30 min., sd., b&w, 16 mm. M Pic

Summary: To a small studio audience, Mr. Jarrell reads six poems and gives interpretive background for an understanding of how each one arose in his experience. The poems are "A Lullaby," "Mail Call," "The Lines," "Losses," "A Pilot From the Carrier," and "Eighth Air Force."



169

Books and children in today's world. Presented by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in cooperation with the School of Education and the State Department of Public Instruction [n.d.] 45 min., sd., b &w, 16 mm.

Summary: Randall Jarrell is interviewed by Ruth Tooze.







OTHER PUBLISHED LECTURES PRESENTED UNDER THE  
AUSPICES OF THE GERTRUDE CLARKE WHITTALL  
POETRY AND LITERATURE FUND

*These brochures, published by the Library of Congress, may be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402, for 25 cents each, with the exceptions noted below.*

AMERICAN POETRY AT MID-CENTURY. 1958. 49 p.

New Poets and Old Muses, by John Crowe Ranson. The Present State of Poetry, by Delmore Schwartz. The Two Knowledges, by John Hall Wheelock.

ANNI MIRABILES, 1921-1925: Reason in the Madness of Letters, by Richard P. Blackmur. 1956. 55 p. Out of print.

ANNIVERSARY LECTURES. 1959. 56 p.

Robert Burns, by Robert S. Hillyer. The House of Poe, by Richard Wilbur. Alfred Edward Housman, by Cleanth Brooks.

FRENCH AND GERMAN LETTERS TODAY. Four Lectures. 1960. 53 p. Out of print.

Lines of Force in French Poetry, by Pierre Emmanuel. Latest Trends in French Prose, by Alain Bosquet. The Modern German Mind: the Legacy of Nietzsche, by Erich Heller. Crossing the Zero Point: German Literature Since World War II, by Hans Egon Holthusen.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW, Man of the Century, by Archibald Henderson. 1957. 15 p. Out of print.

THE IMAGINATION IN THE MODERN WORLD. Three Lectures, by Stephen Spender. 1962. 40 p.

The Imagination as Verb. The Organic, the Orchidaceous, the Intellectualized. Imagination Means Individuation.

PERSPECTIVES: Recent Literature of Russia, China, Italy, and Spain. Four Lectures. 1961. 57 p. Out of print.

Russian Soviet Literature Today, by Marc Slonim. Chinese Letters Since the Literary Revolution (1917), by Lin Yutang. The Progress of Realism in the Italian Novel, by Giose Rimanelli.

The Contemporary Literature of Spain, by Arturo Torres-Rioseco.

RECENT AMERICAN FICTION, by Saul Bellow. 1963. 12 p. 15 cents.

ROBERT FROST: A Backward Look, by Louis Untermeyer. With a selective bibliography. 1964. 40 p.

THREE VIEWS OF THE NOVEL. 1957. 41 p. Out of print.

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